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# Preparing Leaders for Nationbuilding

Lieutenant Colonel Patrick J. Donahoe, U.S. Army

*TRADOC [The U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command] develops competent and adaptive leaders while ensuring currency in our doctrine and looks to the future while maintaining a firm grasp on today . . . , imbuing] the qualities and skills necessary to dominate across the spectrum of conflict.*

—TRADOC Commander's Intent<sup>1</sup>

In A RECENT article, author Robert Kaplan set forth 10 rules for "Managing the World."<sup>2</sup> The first rule is "Produce More Joppolos," referring to Major Victor Joppolo, the protagonist of John Hersey's 1945 Pulitzer Prize-winning novel, *A Bell for Adano*.<sup>3</sup> In Kaplan's view, the fictional Major Joppolo can serve as the model for soldiers during military occupations and peacemaking operations. We clearly need more Joppolos, he says and asks, where are they?

The United States has been waging the Global War on Terrorism (GWOT) since shortly after 11 September 2001 and, arguably, has been unofficially at war with terrorists since the end of Operation Desert Storm. U.S. involvements in international conflicts in the past decade demonstrate that the U.S. Army needs leaders who can shift quickly from combat to stability operations and back again with an eye on winning both war and peace in the Islamic Middle East battlespace. The Army trains the force across the spectrum of conflict but focuses most of its training efforts on high-intensity combat operations while ignoring training on cultural, civic, ethical, and city planning duties that soldiers must perform in Iraq and elsewhere.

The Army must train its leaders to adapt to a fundamentally changed security environment. While the Cold War demanded Army leaders who could lead formations into battle, the new GWOT era demands leaders who can fight as well as their Cold War pre-

decessors could but who can also transition quickly and effectively to stability operations and nationbuilding to defeat radical Islam and its proselytizing terrorists.

## Send More Joppolos to Iraq

In Iraq and elsewhere, the Army asks battalion and company combat commanders to conduct nationbuilding and act as civil affairs officers. Soldiers must master warfighting skills to seize and secure terrain and towns while working peacefully with the local populace and, hopefully, persuading them that nonviolence is the best path to stability. Failing to win the hearts and minds of local people might not sound a mission's death knell, but it makes success in suppressing insurgencies and terrorism more difficult. What is the Army doing to prepare leaders for these undertakings?

In Hersey's story, Joppolo is the archetype for the U.S. military officer or senior noncommissioned officer (NCO) who finds himself working with the "natives" after a successful military campaign. The Army transformed Joppolo, an Italian-American clerk from the Bronx, into a civil affairs officer and assigned him to follow combat troops into Italy during World War II. Eventually he became the military mayor of an Italian town.

After the invasion and liberation of Italy, Joppolo became the face of the American Military Government of Occupied Territories to the people of Adano, Sicily, a small seaside fishing village. A fair-minded man intent on being a just and well-liked city administrator, Joppolo worked diligently at settling Adano's internal disputes, including punishing the village's former mayor, a fascist. Joppolo received permission from the U.S. Navy for local fisherman to return to sea to earn their livelihood. Joppolo's final task was to find a replacement for Adano's bell, which Italian Fascist Benito Mussolini's soldiers had melted down for armaments.

Joppolo had certain advantages that today's Army peacemakers in Iraq do not have. As an Italian-American, he was fluent in Italian, understood Italian culture, and had a personal connection to Italy. Today's Joppolo is an infantryman or tanker who does not have Joppolo's training and skills and faces an incredibly steep learning curve to successfully execute his mission. Still, Army commanders in the field in Iraq expect to be as successful as Joppolo was, even though they do not speak the language, have little understanding of the culture in which they are immersed, and have no personal connection to the country. Also, the Army expects combat arms officers and NCOs to accomplish the tasks that Joppolo as a trained civil affairs specialist performed. The Army has been unsuccessful in recruiting adequate numbers of Afghani- or Iraqi-Americans to fill its ranks of civil affairs officers and cannot conscript them to do so.

Retired U.S. Central Command Commander General Anthony Zinni described the challenges facing the Army's new Joppolos in a recent speech: "On one hand, you have to shoot and kill somebody; on the other hand, you have to feed somebody. On the other hand, you have to build an economy, restructure the infrastructure, and build the political system. And there's some poor lieutenant colonel, colonel, brigadier general down there, stuck in some province with all that saddled onto him, with NGOs [nongovernmental organizations] and political wannabes running around, with factions and a culture he doesn't understand [sic]."<sup>24</sup> Such conflicts are occurring today, and these responsibilities are being juggled right now in Iraq and Afghanistan.

### Training in Law, Ethics, and Nationbuilding

Today, artillery battery commanders and cavalry troop commanders are interacting with local politicians and religious leaders, and many of them are doing rather well. The Army needs to equip them with better skills to make them more effective, however. The Army cannot draft men like Victor Joppolo, so it must build them. The Army must also

educate officers and senior NCOs about the culture, language, history, and geography of the civilizations in which they will operate. The III Corps embarked on such training before deploying to Iraq in 2003.

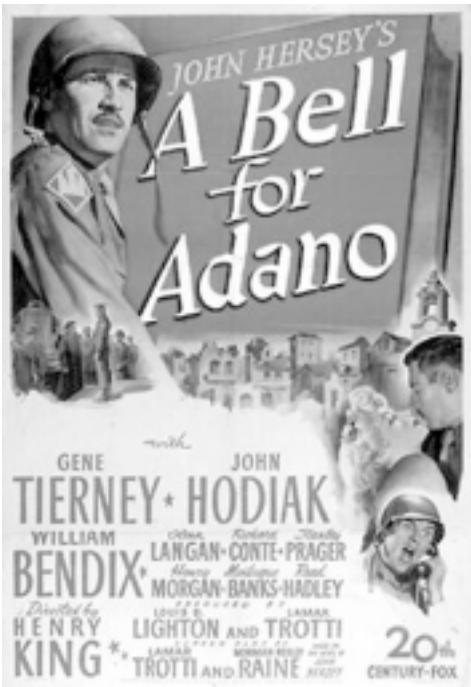
The Army needs to include training in Middle East culture; basic law and civics; city planning and public administration; economics; and ethics in officer basic and career courses, advanced NCO courses, and at the U.S. Army Sergeants Major Academy to prepare leaders for the challenges they will face in Iraq and Afghanistan.

**Culture.** If modern-day Joppolos are to relate successfully to Iraqis or Afghans, they must have a basic understanding of the country's history, language, and culture. As the U.S. Marine Corps (USMC) *Small Wars Manual* says, "Knowledge of the character of the people and a command of their language are great assets."<sup>25</sup>

Ironically, the Army did this throughout the Cold War in Germany. Many soldiers received a 2-week immersion in the culture of Germany through the Head Start program where they learned about the German language and culture when they arrived in Europe.

The Middle East—the Tigris and Euphrates River valleys in particular—is said to be the cradle of civilization, and the Iraqis, Kuwaitis, and Iranians who live there are proud and distinct peoples. If American soldiers do not respect Arab, Persian, and Afghan social customs, they could create an atmosphere of antagonism. Soldiers must understand and have a civilized respect for Islamic traditions and religious beliefs, including the differing beliefs of Sunni, Shiite, and other sects.

**Language training.** Army leaders should be familiar with the languages spoken in their probable areas of operations. The advanced NCO courses, the basic and career officer courses, and the staff and war colleges should provide language training. Officers and NCOs should be able to choose early in their careers to focus on languages that are of greatest use to the Army. At a minimum, the Army should provide Berlitz-type language tapes to its leaders now rather than waiting until they deploy. The USMC understood this in the 1930s and put it



in their *Small Wars Manual*: "If not already familiar with the language, all officers upon assignment to expeditionary duty should study and acquire a working knowledge of it."<sup>6</sup> As Chief of Staff of the Army General Peter J. Schoomaker has said, the Army needs an expeditionary mindset.<sup>7</sup> Language training should be a part of it.

**Officer management.** Victorian England had men who understood the ancient cultures of the Middle East. Among these men were T.E. Lawrence, who gained fame as Lawrence of Arabia, and Colonel Orde Wingate, who spent most of his adult life living in Egypt. The modern U.S. Army has few combat arms officers who have lived and worked among the Arabs for years. A cadre of foreign area officers with career field designation exists, but it is composed of people who never returned to combat units after they attained the rank of captain. Combat arms officers, if they have experience with Arabs at all, gained it during 1-year postings to Saudi Arabia or Kuwait.

One personnel management policy that could give combat arms officers more exposure to the Middle East would be an enhanced exchange program requiring officers to serve 6-month or 1-year tours with foreign armies around the world. The Army will probably be rotating forces into and out of the Muslim world for at least another decade. Even if not, it is prudent to prepare for the eventuality.

**Law and civics.** Army officers should understand the legal structures they might have to resurrect, revitalize, or reinstall in foreign countries. Many battalion-level commanders and some company-level commanders will be intimately involved in setting up or supervising legal systems and activities in Iraq and Afghanistan. Law and civics classes are essential to preparing leaders for this duty. Legal training is imperative. Army leaders must understand their legal obligations and the judicial systems that America wants to see emerge. Understanding civics is critical to the success of these operations. Promoting democracy in the Middle East and Afghanistan will be quite difficult if Army leaders do not have a working knowledge of a democratic government's organizations and functions. When the Army directs its soldiers to play Joppolo and govern towns and cities in an occupied territory, soldiers must know how a free, democratic government is supposed to work.

**Public administration and local economy.** Knowing how to run a city is essential to establishing safety and stability in an urban environment. The most pressing problems Army troops initially faced in Iraq were the reestablishment of electric power, and providing clean water and health care services. Soldiers must understand the basic functions of city

administration and how to organize public works departments to maintain, fix, and if necessary, establish basic city services. The vitality of the local economy and the ability of citizens to buy, sell, and transport goods are essential for a return to normalcy. Freely exchanging goods and services and distributing food (outside of emergency governmental aid) are critical to security.

**Ethics.** The American people, the international community, and the laws of land warfare demand that U.S. forces treat prisoners humanely. Many senior officers comment on the problems inherent in complying with the Geneva Conventions and the Law of Armed Conflict, but soldiers must understand the power of these laws to help the Nation prevail against guerrillas and insurgents.<sup>8</sup> Leaders must understand the adverse effects that violations of these rules have on the soldiers under their command and on the enemy. In 2003, Lieutenant Colonel Allen B. West, an artillery battalion commander, was relieved of command for discharging his weapon near an Iraqi prisoner of war in order to elicit information from him.<sup>9</sup> West's actions demonstrate that tactical leaders do not always clearly understand what is ethical behavior and what is not.

Because U.S. troops will continue to deploy to foreign lands and involvement in the Middle East might continue for some time, the Army needs leaders who can shift quickly from combat to stability operations. The Army must ensure that its leaders have the intellectual and physical tools to succeed as de facto civil affairs officers. The Army needs more leaders like Major Victor Joppolo. **MR**

#### NOTES

1. U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command, "Mission Statement and Commander's Intent," on-line at <[www.tradoc.army.mil/T\\_vision%20.htm](http://www.tradoc.army.mil/T_vision%20.htm)>, accessed 16 April 2004.

2. Robert Kaplan, "Supremacy by Stealth," *The Atlantic Monthly* (July-August 2003): 65.

3. John Hersey, *A Bell for Adano* (New York: A.A. Knopf, 1944).

4. GEN Anthony Zinni, address given at The Marine Corps Association and U.S. Naval Institute Forum, 4 September 2003. See on-line at <[www.mca-usniforum2003.org/forum03zinni.htm](http://www.mca-usniforum2003.org/forum03zinni.htm)>, accessed 10 February 2004.

5. U.S. Marine Corps, *Small Wars Manual* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1940), 26.

6. Ibid.

7. Chief of Staff of the Army GEN Peter J. Schoomaker, quoted in Sergeant First Class Marcia Triggs, "New CSA Vision: More Brigades—Smaller But Lethal," Army News Service, 8 October 2003, on-line at <[www4.army.mil/cspa/read.php?story\\_id\\_5300](http://www4.army.mil/cspa/read.php?story_id_5300)>, accessed 20 April 2004.

8. For more information on the Geneva Conventions and the Law of Armed Conflict, see on-line at <[www1.umn.edu/humanrts/instrct/auoy.htm](http://www1.umn.edu/humanrts/instrct/auoy.htm)>, accessed 20 April 2004.

9. Rowan Scarborough, "Colonel In Iraq Refuses To Resign," *Washington Times*. See on-line at <[www.washingtontimes.com/national/20031030-113114-2964r.htm](http://www.washingtontimes.com/national/20031030-113114-2964r.htm)>, accessed 20 April 2004.

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